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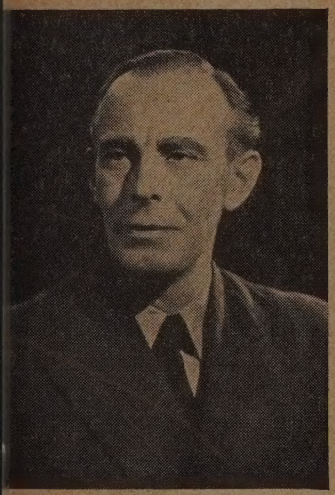
THE UNITARIAN

A MAGAZINE FOR FREE CHRISTIANS



HESE ARE UNITARIANS

No. 10. R. W. Sorenson, by Fred Cottier

Few Unitarian Ministers have d a more varied and interesting reer than the Rev. R. W. Soren- n, M.P. He has served the althamstow Free Christian urch as Lay Pastor from 1916 to 54, and as Minister on the Sup- ementary List from 1954.

Mr. Sorenson is London born; the n of a silversmith. He received s elementary education, up to the e of 14 years, at a Board School.

There is no doubt that the fferent voluntary occupations he undertook contributed to his ability to occupy many positions of responsibility in the life of the community. In his late teens he joined the Progessive League, later to be known as "The Liberal Christian League," and became a member of the Order of Pioneer Preachers—a movement founded and sponsored for the spread of "The New Theology" by the Rev. R. J. Campbell, Minister of the City Temple, London.

The two years (1912-14) that preceded World War One gave the young man ample opportunity to develop his powers of speaking in public; for many were the meetings he conducted in Hyde Park, Highbury Place and other London forums which he attended to expound and explain the tenets of Liberal Christianity.

These were great and formative days for Mr. Sorenson, the young enthusiast; for it was here he learned the art of holding his own against the persistent and professional heckler.

Mr. Sorenson would be the first to acknowledge his indebtedness to the Pioneer Preachers, and to the good work done before the promiscuous crowds of interested men and women in the "Open-air Forum."

It was during his Pioneer Preachers day that he began to serve the cause of Unitarianism at Walthamstow where he is still the Minister.

His interests turned out to be many and varied. For five years he supervised a Farming Community while still carrying on the work of Lay Pastor. And it was during this

period Mr. Sorensen was brought before the Stratford Magistrates to answer a charge of not complying with the Military Service Act. The accusation was that, as a "Market Gardener" he was not exempt from military service. However, the Magistrates recognised his work as Pastor at Walthamstow, and as a result the case against him was dismissed; to the relief both of the Officials of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, and the Order of Pioneer Preachers. It is interesting to observe that Mrs. Sorensen is a Magistrate in this same Court at Stratford.

During his work as "Market Gardener" he became an enthusiastic propagandist for the Independent Labour Party and occupied the Platform on many occasions with prominent Labour Leaders such as Fenner Brockway, Clifford Allen (later promoted to Lord Allen of Hurtwood), G. H. G. Cole, and others. He then became organising Secretary for the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and took part in the work of the W.E.A. as terminal Course Lecturer. Eventually his profound interest in Education brought him the Chairmanship of the Walthamstow Education Committee in 1922.

Amid his many activities Mr. Sorensen found time for writing; the production of plays (as an amateur) and giving public lectures. Beside this he is an entertainer in ventriloquism, mimicry, and the thoughtful manipulator of puppets mixed with a little conjuring. An all round man indeed.

He was elected a Member of Parliament for West Leyton in 1929-31; was re-elected in 1935 and 1945, and was, in 1950 elected the member for Leyton. Mr. Sorensen has been a Member of Parliament for 29 years during which time he has served on numerous Parliamentary Committees.

He was Secretary and then Chairman of the India League of which Krishna Menon is the present Secretary. He has visited India on more than one occasion as guest of Mr. Nehru, Gandhi, and other prominent Indian Statesmen and seers. He has toured Canada, Finland, Germany, Malaya, Borneo, Hong Kong, Ceylon, Lebanon and Greece in connection with his Parliamentary duties.

He is, at the moment, Co-Secretary of the Indo-British Parliamentary Group, and keeps the House of Commons on its toes in matters relative to Indian problems and improved Social amelioration. He has written books and pamphlets on such subjects as "God and Bread," "Tolpuddle," "My impressions of India," etc.

With a wide experience of World Affairs, Mr. Sorensen examines the difficulties that arise in the light of Liberal Religion. He continues to serve our Group of Churches, and in particular, he ministers to Walthamstow Free Church, whose members retain an affectionate admiration for the Minister and his wife who are doing much excellent work in the Church and the neighbourhood.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

The Birthday Party

Lisbeth's birthday was on the Friday so they had decided to leave the party until Saturday; and long before lunch-time mother was wishing she had never heard of it. Raymond fussed around, asking continually about the arrangements.

"For goodness sake, Raymond," said mother, "I know the party is to-night; but just now I have other things to think about—lunch for instance. Don't you want any lunch?"

Raymond calmed down quickly.

"Why, yes mother, of course," he said, "er—please."

"Good. Then please stop bother-
g me."

"But isn't there something *I* can
, mum? What about the jellies?"

Mother gave in and explained to
aymond, simply, about jellies.

When she returned from shop-
ng, she was relieved to find that
aymond had succeeded and the
llies were cooling. So all was well
ntil tea-time, when Raymond
oudly insisted on serving his
llies. Pride took a back seat,
owever, as the unfortunate Ray-
ond, in his anxiety, smartly
ooped one portion on to a little
rl's frock, another down a little
oy's neck and a third down his
ther's jacket. His father was very
oss as Raymond soon found out;
nd when the other boy and girl
ere cleaned up and had become
ss upset, he was banished to a
at by his father who kept an eye
n him for the rest of the meal.

But, later, someone who should
ave known better, allowed Ray-
ond to join in "Blind Man's
uff"; and when he had broken a
lass bowl and several things on
ne mantelpiece, fallen over every-
ody and trodden on his father's
oot, his activities abruptly came to
n end. Afterwards his mother
aid: "Raymond—twenty girls and
oys were in here and did not do a
crap of damage between them.
hen *you* appear and everything
oes wrong. Why?"

"I don't know, mum," he replied,
things just happen."

Which just about sums it up.

OR MEDITATION

By Rev. T. J. Jones

I write this piece under the
mpact of the news, towards the
nd of December, of the passing of
he Reverend, and Revered Dr.
Alfred Hall. However, much may
e written in the meantime in
adulation of one of our "giants," what I write now will abide with me as an abiding inspiration, and can be a matter for fruitful meditation to all.

Dr. Hall once gave, in my hearing, an alternative interpretation of the letters "O.B.E." with great effect. He declared that, though we might not all receive the Order of the British Empire, we could, if we would, all belong to the Order of the Blessed Encouragers. No greater honour coud be paid to him; and no finer legacy left to us.

To encourage, that is, to "boost" one's courage in the struggle of life, is like a burst of sunshine in the midst of all the chilling winds of discouragement. It is like a surgical "shot in the arm." We all appreciate it; but, how often do we apply it? A word in season, or a little act, can supply it, and work wonders. But, oh how difficult some people seem to find it!

There are those who appear to find it an anatomical impossibility to form the lips to say a kind word, utter a spontaneous "Thanks," or pay a simple compliment. Criticism, disapproval, condemnation, they can manage with eloquence . . . but the other? No, it would be positive pain to exercise the unused muscles to form even a smile. And as for doing the kindly act, however small . . . it is outside the scope of the imagination to conceive one, and the hands to perform one. Shame on us if we allow this divinest power to atrophy!

I say "divinest," advisedly; recalling a Rectorial Address by J. M. Barrie on "Courage," in which he described this virtue as the "Rib" of God, out of which Man was made (and Woman, even if only by a "transference" operation, a la Genesis!). Blessed, then, are the Encouragers: for they are of the greatest in the Kingdom of God.

INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY

By Kenneth Twinn

For many years now the last Sunday in February has been observed in Liberal Churches of various parts of the world as "International Sunday." This is really an abbreviation of what ought to be a more precise title, for it means the Sunday on which churches are asked to remember the work of the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom, whose common abbreviation, in turn, is I.A.R.F., and to take a collection for its funds.

Let me first give some facts about the Association. Its permanent headquarters—"Secretariat" it is officially called—are in The Hague, Holland, where, with a small office staff, three part-time secretaries look after its affairs. It consists of "member-groups" in 25 countries covering Europe, America, India, Japan and the Philippine Islands, all of which are committed to the principle of freedom and liberalism in religion. Few of these groups call themselves "Unitarian"; some are the liberal "wings" of orthodox churches in their particular countries, such as in Germany, Holland, Switzerland and Sweden; others are independent churches which bear various names, as the Brahmo Somaj Movement in India, the Czecho-Slovak Church, the Universalist Church of America. The only groups which take the Unitarian name are in America, Great Britain, Hungary, Transylvania (Rumania) Czecho-Slovakia and Western Germany. It will be realised from this that in some lands there is more than one member group. Some distinguished men have held the office of President, including Rt. Hon. J. Chuter Ede, the present President of our General Assembly, and former Home Secretary, and Hon. Percy Brundage, former Director of the Budget of the U.S.A.

Expressed briefly, the aims of the I.A.R.F. are threefold: "To bring into closer union the historic liberal churches, the liberal element in all churches, and isolated congregations and workers for religious freedom; to draw into the same fellowship free religious groups throughout the world which are in essential agreement with our ways of thinking; to open and maintain communications with free Christian groups in all lands who are striving to unite religion and liberty and to increase fellowship and co-operation among them."

The I.A.R.F. has been in existence now nearly 60 years, having been founded in America in 1900, though under another name. It has held a number of international congresses, as well as other smaller conferences, where questions of common interest have been studied and personal contacts made between liberal religious leaders and ordinary individuals in the various member-groups.

These have generally been organised every three years, except for war-time. The 17th was held in Chicago in August last, when some 800 people from 20 countries took part, about 30 of these being from the United Kingdom, including official delegates from the General Assembly. These are, indeed, the bare facts, but it is impossible to convey the sense of fellowship, lively discussion, good humour and light-hearted fun which are the ingredients of the rich experience offered to participants. A number of our churches are now hearing about all this from those who attended the Chicago Congress, and various aspects of this Congress have already been treated in articles in our sister periodical, *The Inquirer*.

It is true that comparatively few

f our people can join in these inter-
ational congresses, but it is an
ncouraging thought that there are
eligious liberals in many countries
f the world and that they are
inked together in a world-wide
rganisation. It is possible for all
who are interested in the work of
he Association to have regular
ews of its activities through the
fficial *News Digest* and at the
ame time to support it financially
y becoming "Individual Members."
his costs 10s. a year. The
ndividual Members Secretary for
Great Britain is Rev. Kenneth
Twinn, M.A., Harrison Parsonage,
Atherton, Manchester, who will be
lad to receive subscriptions for the
urrent year from new members as
well as present ones.

Readers are asked to see that
heir churches observe International
Sunday on February 3rd, and to
give as generously as they can to
he collections for the funds of the
I.A.R.F.

RE-BUILDING AT GREAT HUCKLOW

The Children's Home, that well-loved eyesore now over fifty years old, may soon be no more. A few years ago it was planned to replace it with an imposing structure, but the scheme had to be abandoned as beyond the means of the Northern Sunday School Federation and the Appeal Fund. But now there are new moves afoot.

At the annual meeting of the N.S.S.F. last Good Friday it was decided to dispose of the Children's Home and its grounds and to provide alternative accommodation for children on other Homes property. Sketch plans have now been drawn up for a new building on Barleycrofts site. Here it is proposed to erect a two-storey block, connected to Barleycrofts by a covered way, with four separate dormitories of eight beds, each bed being suitable for doubling up by slotting on an upper bed. This would provide very flexible accommodation (one, two or three dormitories being allocated to girls or boys according to need), up to a maximum of sixty-four persons. There would be two separate rooms for supervisors, adequate water-closets, wash-bowl, shower and heating facilities, and a wardrobe by each bed. Meals would be served in Barleycrofts, reducing the number of kitchens at the Homes from three to two.

In accordance with a scheme (now before the Charity Commission), for unifying the Homes under one Trust, it is intended that this block should not be reserved exclusively for children, but that it may be used for young adults (and others) to whom dormitory accommodation is acceptable, on occasions when the full and efficient use of the Homes makes it desirable.

The anticipated cost, including amended drainage for the Barleycroft site and a new septic tank, but excluding beds and the necessary alterations to Barleycrofts dining-room and kitchen, is about £10,000. The value, on realisation to-day, of the Grundy Home investments is about £8,500, and of the Children's Home Re-building Fund about £4,000.

Now that definite proposals, within the financial possibilities, are being laid before the Charity Commission, early permission to use the Grundy money is hoped for; and then only the approval of the Federation remains before building can commence.

As a result of much committee work in recent years, the Homes Centre is beginning to take on a new look. 1957 saw the new Homes Management Committee brought into being. 1958 saw the new post of voluntary Homes secretary filled by Mr. Geoffrey Waywell, and the new post of Warden by Mr. Henry Tittle. Perhaps 1959 may see the completion of the new Trust and—who knows?—of the new building.

NEWS AND VIEWS

OVERSEAS CHURCHES

Mr. and Mrs. Tunstall, Chairman of the CAPE TOWN Church have just returned from a visit to England. They took back greetings from eleven English Unitarian churches.

ADELAIDE reports that its Choir is greatly increased in strength and now fills both sides of the chancel.

HOME CHURCHES

On the initiative of the Moderator of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland a Committee on Social Affairs has been set up. The Committee has decided that the first question to be considered is the problem of old age. As a first step it is suggested that a fixed annual income be sought to be used to pay the way of any of our old people who may need to enter a home, or else to endow some beds at such homes. Deliberation on the subject continues.

More than seven hundred people were present at the reopening service and dedication of memorials and gifts in the first Presbyterian (Non Subscribing) Church, DUNMURRY.

SPEKE congregation has lost its temporary building and will worship instead at Gateacre Chapel on Sunday evenings. An appeal for funds to erect a new building will be launched in the near future.

SWINTON has raised two hundred and twenty five pounds towards its one thousand pound Renovation Fund, and an order has been placed to have the Schoolroom refloored. At Christmas the Choir, augmented by singers from Urmston, presented "The Nazarene." The children gave an adaptation of "The Fourth Wise Man."

The old Cross Street hut is about to be reopened at URMSTON where members have spent many hours rebuilding and decorating it.

"Have you seen the circular from Headquarters advising the use of ticker tape?"

PENDLETON is issuing a new monthly calendar with interesting and varied contents.

SOUTHPORT Annual Bazaar raised £378. A local journal has carried a lengthy article on the history of the Church. Southport Lyric Singers gave extracts from the "Messiah" at Christmas.

At BATH Mrs. E. D. Spencer gave a recital of Oscar Wilde's "Story of the Gentle Giant" just before Christmas.

The Rev. J. M. Quirk, Minister at GLOUCESTER AND CHELTENHAM, is serving on a City Education Sub-Committee to revise the syllabus of religious instruction in the schools.

The Annual Congregational Party was held at BROOKFIELD Church on January 3rd.

DUKINFIELD Old Chapel presented "Humpty Dumpty" as the annual pantomime this year. Old age pensioners were admitted for sixpence at some shows.

A Dedication Service for new members was held at MOSSLEY on the first Sunday in the New Year.

STAND New Look Fair raised £216. Principal Kenworthy spoke to a meeting on "What Unitarianism is."

PADIHAM was one of many of our churches that held a special Toy Service at Christmas. Toys were put on a tree and later taken to a children's hospital.

STOCKPORT Gift Day raised £302.

HALLIWELL ROAD, BOLTON, had a dramatic act of worship at Christmas. Written in the style of a mediaeval nativity play it incorporated T. S. Eliot's "Journey of the Magi."

At BRIGHTON a Service for People of All Faiths had as preacher Sir Henry Self, B.D., M.Sc., Ph.D., Chairman of the Electricity Council. There were special readings by a Moslem, a Jew and a Christian.

The Unitarian Advance Campaign continues at ALTRINCHAM AND SALE with a special meeting at Dunham Road in January, when various speakers discussed "How Churchgoing helps a Unitarian."

UNITARIANS IN THE NEWS

Mr. R. R. S. Plummer of Altrincham has been appointed Chairman of the North Western Section of the Institute of Transport.

Dr. Jeremy Goring and Mr. Martin Davies have decided to enter the Unitarian ministry. Dr. Goring is well known to our southern churches and to readers of the "Inquirer." Mr. Davies, the son of the Rev. Brett Davies, completes a social science degree at Liverpool this year.

MINISTER KEEP STILL!

Choir boys at King's, Canterbury, play cricket during the sermon. If the preacher lifts both arms that means six, arms out means a wide, and every stutter or "er" means one run.

THE INQUIRER

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THE LINDSEY PRESS

THE BELIEFS OF A UNITARIAN
By Alfred Hall, M.A., D.D.
2s., by post 2s. 6d.

THE STORY OF UNITARIANISM
By Raymond V. Holt, B.Litt., M.A.
6d., by post 8d.

WHAT UNITARIANS BELIEVE
By Dorothy Tarrant, M.A., Ph.D.
6d., by post 8d.

"I'M NOT RELIGIOUS BUT—"
By Arthur Peacock
6d., by post 8d.

The Lindsey Press, Essex Hall, 1—6, Essex Street, London, W.C.2.

UNITARIANS THWARTING PEACE?

The following is an extract from the letter of a strict Baptist minister to the Brighton Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament:

"I note that your sponsors include one or two Jews and at least one Unitarian. So long as men set at naught the claims and the Godhead of Jesus Christ there is no hope for peace. And it is futile (and indeed forbidden of God) for believers on the Lord Jesus Christ to stand side by side with those who deny him in any effort to secure it."

THE CHURCH THAT SAYS "WE AGREE TO DIFFER"

It remains true, however, that this Church has no creed. It believes in complete freedom for its members to think for themselves, to search for truth about God in their own minds. And it allows them freedom to differ.

It looks on Jesus, not as the "only begotten" Son of God, but as a leader and example "born to show what human life can become when lived in obedience to God's will."

Unitarians refuse to believe that those who do evil go to hell. An all-loving God, they say, would not create a place of everlasting punishment.

What about Heaven? They do not try to describe what an afterlife will be like. Nobody knows. They think it will be "life nearer to God Himself."

But, for the most part, Unitarians prefer, as one of their ministers has said, "to take one world at a time." Rather than speculate about life after death, they seek to make this world just and righteous, beautiful and happy—by listening to God's will.

Do Unitarians regard the Bible as the "Word of God?" No. They do not accept everything in it as true.

But they look on it as a supremely valuable book, from which much knowledge of God can be obtained.

—*From the "Sunday Express."*

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Northern S.S. Federation

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